points of time, the policy of the Govt. is to fill up the vacancies promptly.

(b) In the light of the judgement of the Central Administrative Tribunal, Ernakulam, delivered on 10.1.1992, instructions have already been issued in April, 1992 advising Zonal Railways that "duty at a stretch of running staff" should not ordinarily exceed 10 hours from departure of the train and overall duty from 'signing on' to 'signing off' should not exceed 12 hours save in exceptional circumstances like accidents, floods/ breaches, agitation, equipment failures etc. Implementation of these instructions is monitored at divisional/zonal and Railways Board's levels with a view to ensure proper compliance of the instructions.

Modernisation of Railway stations in Tamil Nadu

3501. SHRI N. THALAVAI SUNDARAM: Will the Minister of RAILWAYS be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government have identified railway stations in Tamil Nadu for modernisation; if so, the names thereof; and

(b) the measures Government have taken for their modernisation?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF RAILWAYS (SHRI RAM NAIK): (a) and (b) Modernisation of railway stations is a continuous process and the same is undertaken wherever so warranted due to growth in passenger traffic and changes in traffic pattern, subject to availability of funds. Works in this regard are included in the annual works programme of the Railways.

Details of various major works already taken up in the State of Tamil Nadu are as under:

	Particulars of works	Anticipated cost in lakh Rs.
1.	(a) Chennai Central-Improvements of circulating area by way of covering over Bucknigham canal adjacent of new concourse.	180.00
	(b) Chennai Central-Improvements to architectural feature, remodelling of vegitarian refeshment room, improvement to dadoing in waiting hall, illuminated boards, lighting in concourse and flooring in new concourse.	65.46
	(c) Improvements to circulating area by covering the Buckingham Canal towards south.	90.10
	(d) Provision of washable apron on platforms	15.23
	(e) Extension of platform shelter	17.41
	(f) Chennai Central Suburban Terminal-Conversion of platform No. 14 into island platform etc.	97.11
2.	Madurai Jn. Provision of foot-over-bridge	136.90
	Raising of platform level	17.23
	Second entry & circulating area, improved lighting, waiting hall etc.	49.28
3.	Melamaruvathur —New station building.	16.16
4.	Pattaravakkam —Provision of foot-over-bridge	23.09

In addition to the above various works of modernisation of smaller station have also been taken up at Veppampattu, Katpadi, Tondiarpet, Kavarapettai, Tiruttani, Tiruppur, Coimbatore Jn., Tulukapatti, Tenmalai and Udumalpet.

Guidelines for awarding contracts to run *bookstalls* at railway platforms

3502. SARDAR GURCHARAN SINGH TOHRA: Will the Minister of RAILWAYS be pleased to state:

(a) the criteria/guidelines adopted for awarding contracts to run bookstalls at railway platforms;

(b) the period for which such contracts are usually given;

(c) the procedure for renewal of such licences;

(d) whether it is a fact that the same contractors managed to renew the licences and are running their business for decades together; and

(e) if so, the steps taken by Government to break their monopoly?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF RAILWAYS (SHRI RAM NAIK): (a) As per extant policy, all new bookstall contracts are awarded to unemployed graduates, their co-operatives, partnerships, associations and co-operative societies of actual workers and vendors by inviting applications through Press Notifications after following prescribed procedure.

(b) Five years.

(c) to (e) The renewal is done after reviewing the performance of the bookstall licencee. Some of the licences are working for the last many years in view of their satisfactory performance and renewals in due course.

Period for booking railway reservation

3503. SHRI E. BALANANDAN:
SHRI NILOTPAL BASU:

Will the Minister of RAILWAYS be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government are aware that the extended period for booking reservation in Railways from one month to two months before, has caused serious crisis to get reservations in Railways as this has given enough scope for the touts and racketeers to block the tickets;

(b) whether it is rational to think that the people have to decide two months before their journey;

(c) if not, whether Government are considering to go back to earlier system of '10 days before' reservation in the age of computers;

(d) if so, when; and

(e) if not, the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF RAILWAYS (SHRI RAM NAIK): (a) No such complaints has been received.

(b) The major problem in getting reservation is during Summer Vacations, Puja Holidays, Winter Vacations etc. the days of which are known to passengers in advance and they can plan their journeys well in advance.

(c) There is no such proposal under consideration.

(d) Does not arise

(e) Any reduction in the period of advance booking will increase and not reduce touting activities.

Complaints from passengers of Rajdhani Express running between Patna and Delhi

3504. SHRI SANJAY NIRUPAM: Will the Minister of RAILWAYS be pleased to state:

(a) whether there have been complaints from passengers of Rajdhani trains as reported in 'Indian Express' dated 15th June, 1998 about Rajdhani train running between Patna and Delhi;

(b) if so, the number of such complaints received from passengers of various Rajdhani and Shatabdi trains during the last six months; and

(c) what action has been taken to ensure that passengers of these premier trains are provided all the facilities?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF RAILWAYS (SHRI RAM NAIK): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) 230 complaints were received from passengers of various Rajdhani/Shatabdi Express trains during the last six months.

(c) Catering services in these trains are being closely monitored and remedial action is taken. The Pantry car contract for New Delhi-Patna Rajdhani Express